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FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AND AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: RECOMMENDATION FOR MEETING WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER ON UNGA MARGINS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

11. (U) This is an action message -- see para 5.

12. (U) As reported septel, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Foreign Minister equivalent) Lamin Kaba Bajo will head The Gambia's delegation to the upcoming UNGA session. The GOTG has requested meetings for Bajo with the Secretary and AF A/S Frazer.

13. (C) I recognize that scheduling a meeting for Bajo with the Secretary at this late date is not likely, but I do recommend that A/S Frazer or DAS Thomas-Greenfield meet with him. High-level contacts between senior Washington officials and the GOTG are infrequent, and I believe that a meeting on the UNGA margins would serve to reinforce our message on various issues -- first and foremost, on the country's negative human rights trend and on the importance of The Gambia's upcoming Presidential and National Assembly elections for the country's democratic evolution. A meeting would also serve to encourage a constructive response by the GOTG to the recent suspension of its MCA eligibility as well as its continued cooperation in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and its participation in Darfur peacekeeping.

14. (C) Following are suggested points for a meeting:

-- We remain deeply concerned about the negative trend in The Gambia's human rights situation that was a key factor in the MCC's decision to suspend The Gambia's MCA eligibility;

-- We urge your government to act promptly to reverse the negative human rights trend by, for example, ensuring free, and transparent Presidential and National Assembly elections, which are potentially crucial milestones in the country's democratic evolution;

-- It is also imperative that your government uphold the rights of all detainees, including those allegedly involved in the failed coup plot last March, and bring to account any officials responsible for the reported torture of detainees;

-- We also urge your government to foster a more open, freer media environment and permit the journal, the "Independent," to resume publication;

-- Regarding MCA, the decision to suspend The Gambia's eligibility was regrettable, but the MCC had no choice, given the data it received indicating slippage in your government's performance on various eligibility criteria related to governance and human rights as well as economic policy;

-- Suspension does not mean that the door to MCA is forever closed to The Gambia; our Embassy in Banjul stands ready to

consult with your government on the areas of slippage and ways of addressing them, but it will be up to your government to take the steps necessary to begin the process of seeking reinstatement of eligibility;

-- We continue to value The Gambia's cooperation in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and hope that your government's expanded dialog of late with Iran, the leading state sponsor of terrorism, does not mean a change in your stance on the GWOT;

-- We are mindful of your contribution of troops and police officers to the AU peacekeeping operation in Darfur and urge your support for the transition of AMIS to a UN force.

15. (U) Action request: please advise regarding prospects for a meeting. .
STAFFORD